



THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

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NEW YORK, NY 10021

March 13, 1989

JOSHUA LEDERBERG

PRESIDENT

Dr. Jan Sapp  
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Dear Dr. Sapp:

Thank you for your letter of February 24th and the manuscript on The Nine Lives of Gregor Mendel. Your de- or reconstruction of the writings of Mendel and his critics is provocative and interesting; though I still tend to cling to the traditional myth of neglect and community misunderstanding. Who else between 1865 and 1900 was writing about particulate Anlogen and their segregation?

I am also looking forward to your essay on Protozoology and Development.

Your account of 90 applicants for a position in the History of Science at UC San Diego is startling and dismaying; though I hope it is some measure of the emerging popularity of history of science. And thank you for pointing out the range of work going on there: I wish you well!

I will eschew the word "flattered"; but I must say that I was very much moved by your suggestion of writing a biographical work. I do have some hundred and odd linear feet of correspondence and other files and it would be a formidable task for anyone to make proper use of such material! So I have made a kind of commitment to try to do that myself, and will know during the next three or four years whether it really is a feasible project. I think you do have what would be a pivotal chapter of such a memoir -- it appeared in the Annual Review of Genetics for 1987. Besides the intellectual history and scientific substance, I believe I would be fairly sensitive to the issues of sociological setting, being informed especially by Robert Merton and Harriet Zuckerman in that dimension. The more personal facets of biography are more elusive, partly as in my introspection I have such limited recall of any developmental process. By the time I was 13, which is roughly as far back as I can remember in any detail, I was already terminally differentiated; and I just don't

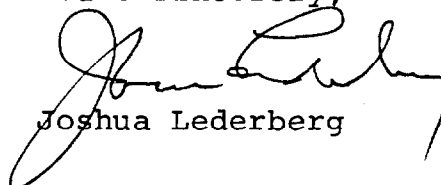
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have very much data about prior developmental process. Of course, I am referring primarily to scientific orientation and it has been in my extra-scientific activities that I could argue for some continued unfolding. But for all of those reasons I refer to my program as a memoir rather than a biography.

I would certainly welcome your observations on the theory of scientific biography; and perhaps at some later stages of my own writing I might hope to call upon you for some critical discussion.

Yours sincerely,



Joshua Lederberg

P.S. I did not understand the line on your Page 7 that refers to "only one kind of element in the germ cell for any one trait".

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